The Gentlemen under-mentioned having agreed to form themſelves into A Society for Conſtitutional Information, have come to the following, amongſt other Reſolutions; viz.

RESOLVED, That this Society be called, *The Society for Conſtitutional Information.*

RESOLVED, That this Society be unlimited in its number; and that no one ſhall be eſteemed a member, who hath not ſubſcribed and paid at leaſt *One* Guinea as an Annual Subſcription towards its expences; and that no Annual Subſcription ſhall exceed *Five* Guineas: and if any one ſhall chooſe to compound by paying down *Fifty* Guineas, he ſhall be deemed a perpetual member.

RESOLVED, That the Annual Subſcription do commence on the firſt day of May of this preſent year.

RESOLVED, That all Subſcriptions and Donations in aid of this Society be paid into the hands of T. B. Hollis, Eſq. in Craven-ſtreet, Strand, until a Treaſurer be appointed.

RESOLVED, That as ſoon as Fifty members are aſſociated, a General Meeting ſhall be called, when the ſeveral laws and regulations already agreed to ſhall be read over; and confirmed, altered, or annulled. And at this meeting there ſhall be elected a Preſident, &c.

RESOLVED, That all members, after the aſſociation of Thirty is complete, ſhall be choſen by ballot, &c.

Ed. Bridgen, Eſq. F. R. A. S.
R. Brockleſby, M. D. F. R. S.
Rev. Mr. Bromley.
Major Cartwright.
John Churchill, Eſq.
John Froſt, Eſq.
T. B. Hollis, Eſq. F. R. A. S.
J. Jebb, M. D. F. R. S.
C. Lofft, Eſq.
Colonel Miles.
R. Price, D. D. F. R. S.
Thomas Rogers, Eſq.
R. B. Sheridan, Eſq.
James Trecothick, Eſq.
John Vardy, Eſq.
Frederick Vincent, Eſq.

TO THE PUBLIC.

THE ADDRESS OF The Society for Conſtitutional Information.

IN the venerable Conſtitution handed down to us, through a long ſucceſſion of ages, from our Saxon and Britiſh anceſtors, this is the baſis and the vital principle——LAW, TO BIND ALL, MUST BE ASSENTED TO BY ALL. Edward I

And it was their felicity to have made that "beſt diſcovery of political "wiſdom," whereby this aſſent of all throughout the realm was to be collected and carried into execution; namely, a freely-choſen, a full and equal REPRESENTATION. But it was foreſeen, that to delegate the power of enacting Laws to a ſingle aſſembly of Repreſentatives, or to a ſingle Council, or a ſingle Magiſtrate, would be to eſtabliſh at once a deſpotiſm; and to divide it between Two only, would not provide a laſting ſecurity againſt that evil; for that which ſhould once acquire the aſcendant, would neceſſarily render itſelf abſolute. Hence it was wiſely ſettled that the Legiſlature ſhould conſiſt of THREE diſtinct powers, with different gradations of dignity, and conſequently different individual intereſts; while the harmonizing of the whole ſhould produce the good of the State: ſo that by reaſon of this diverſity of individual intereſts, and the oppoſing ſentiments and paſſions thence naturally excited, every matter propoſed might be exhibited in all poſſible lights, and undergo a full and free diſcuſſion; and nothing become LAW, but through the medium of mature deliberation, and mutual conceſſions to that grand intereſt which was common to all.

Theſe three powers we call King, Lords, and Commons.

It is on all hands agreed, that this inſtitution of GOVERNMENT is excellently adapted to the ſecurity of that Freedom which is our common inheritance. But this is only acknowledged, ſo long as each of theſe powers remains *independent* of either or both of the other two: for, if one of them ſhould loſe its independence, it is evident that our government, notwithſtanding outward appearances, would conſiſt of only *two powers*; and if *two* ſhould loſe their independence, it is equally evident that our government, although *three in form*, would in effect conſiſt of only *one power*.

The moment that either the Crown, the Lords, or the Commons loſe their independence, in that moment our Conſtitution is violated, our Government is overturned, and our Liberty is endangered.

As every Engliſhman has an equal inheritance in this liberty; and in thoſe laws and that conſtitution which have been provided for its defence; it is therefore neceſſary that every Engliſhman ſhould know what that Conſtitution IS; when it is SAFE; and when ENDANGERED.

To diffuſe this knowledge univerſally throughout the realm, to circulate it through every village and hamlet, and even to introduce it into the humble dwelling of the cottager, is the wiſh and the hope of this Society.

They truſt it is a wiſh that will be approved by all good men; and that it is a hope not ill founded, in a country whoſe love of Liberty is its

its characteriſtic, and where every thing generous, and in favour of that liberty, is congenial with the beſt and warmeſt feelings of the people.

So extremely ſimple are thoſe firſt principles of our Conſtitution, upon which depend THE LIBERTY OF THE PEOPLE, that the Society are convinced any ſuch inſtitution as theirs had for ever been unneceſſary, had not certain of our Parliaments without authority, unjuſtly, and againſt their fidelity, deſpiſing the wiſdom of the great founders of our government and the rights of their conſtituents, departed from and violated this ſound maxim of popular Freedom, that "To the bulk of any nation, deſtined to *labour* and not to *ſtudy*, to *act* and not to *ſpeculate*, it is neceſſary to enjoy the *poſſeſſion* undiminiſhed, and the conſtant *exerciſe* unabridged, of its legiſlative or ELECTION RIGHTS, as *the only poſſible means* by which it can retain *a knowledge* of thoſe rights and of their ineſtimable value; or by which it can preſerve its liberty."

And, agreeable to this maxim, an excellent author informs us, that "Our Saxon forefathers eſtabliſhed their government in Britain, before "the tranſactions of mankind were recorded in writing, at leaſt among "the northern nations: they, therefore, handed down to poſterity the "principles of their government, BY THE ACTUAL EXERCISE OF THEIR "RIGHTS; which became the ancient uſage and cuſtom of the people, "and the law of the land. And hence it came to paſs, that when this "ancient cuſtom and uſage *ceaſed* to act, *the remembrance* of the cuſtom "ceaſed with it. We may add to this, that, ſince the Conqueſt, our "arbitrary kings, and men of arbitrary principles, have endeavoured to "deſtroy the few remaining records and hiſtorical facts, that might keep "in remembrance a form of government ſo kind, friendly, and hoſpitable "to the human ſpecies *.

It is the aim of this Society to ſupply, as far as may be, the want of thoſe deſtroyed records, and to revive in the minds of their fellow-citizens, THE COMMONALTY AT LARGE, a knowledge of their loſt rights; ſo that, knowing the value of their inheritance, and the abſolute neceſſity of exerciſing their election rights as extenſively and as conſtantly as our ſacred Conſtitution and its great Founders intended, they may reſtore Freedom and Independency to that branch of the legiſlature which originates from, repreſents, and is anſwerable to THEMSELVES.

That this Independency hath been unconſtitutionally incroached upon, hath long, from its notoriety, been the public ſentiment, and is now the public complaint: and even that the Commons' Houſe of Parliament itſelf hath acknowledged both the juſtice and the neceſſity of this complaint, by its memorable vote on the 6th day of this month.

If there be any one cauſe of alarm to the people of England of greater magnitude than all others, it is ſuch a confeſſion as this on the part of their repreſentatives in the legiſlature: it is big with ſolemn warning; it is full of ſerious admonition.

Hence all thoſe who have a regard for their peace, their property, or their ſacred laws; all who feel the tender affections of kindred, or children, or parents; all who are friendly to ſociety, or who love their country; who are inſpired by gratitude to the founders and preſervers of this Conſtitution, and who wiſh to leave it as an inheritance to poſterity, are called upon by every conſideration which can awaken ſleeping virtue, or ſtimulate the breaſt to wiſe and generous actions for their own and their country's good, thoroughly to inform themſelves what the Conſtitution IS; what is its preſent DANGER; and by what means it may be placed in SAFETY.

April 1780.

* Hiſtorical Eſſay on the Engliſh Conſtitution, p. 8.